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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/2014
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KS](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ROH SPEEKS VERY FRANKLY, AGAIN

Classified By: Amb. Alexander Vershbow. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

1. (C) President Roh Moo-hyun delivered angry and provocative remarks on December 21 to National Unification Advisory Council, criticizing three former Ministers, Goh Kun, Kim Geun-Tae and Chung Dong-young and railing against former defense ministers and generals. Taking 70 minutes to deliver remarks that were only allotted 20 minutes, Roh spoke extemporaneously about the Six Party Talks and BDA, wartime operation control (OPCON) and the country's sovereignty. In an address that offered as many questions as statements, Roh appeared to be "thinking out loud" as he spoke about the principles and beliefs that serve as the basis of his domestic and foreign policy decisions. Roh's stated purpose of the speech was to clarify the principles that were guiding the government, recognizing that many in the public feel the government is without principles, or clear direction, in its decision-making process. In the end, Roh may have done more to confuse and enrage the public as the press once again seized the opportunity for controversial headlines. The Ambassador conveyed to FM Song Min-soon that these remarks, both in tone and substance, were not helpful for the U.S.-ROK alliance. Song attempted to walk back and explain some of Roh's remarks. See paragraph 6 for an unofficial English translation of excerpts from Roh's remarks.

FOREIGN MINISTER SONG MIN-SOON'S RESPONSE

2. (C) In a meeting with Foreign Minister Song Min-soon, the Ambassador expressed concerns about Roh's speech. He told the Foreign Minister he was surprised by the tone of some of the remarks that seemed to indicate the United States could not be trusted, was an unreliable alliance partner, and was responsible for the lack of progress in the Six-Party Talks. FM Song responded with an attempt to explain away and walk back some of President Roh's more controversial statements. Please tell Washington that President Roh was not complaining about the Alliance, Song urged. Rather, he meant to point out that what he was doing as President was good for the Alliance, but that he had been unduly criticized for causing the Alliance to deteriorate. Regarding the President's comments about the U.S. Department of the Treasury, President Roh had pointed out that Treasury was acting in accordance with U.S. laws and regulations in the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) case, Song explained, while he believed the State Department was focused more on international political considerations.

FM Song told the Ambassador that President Roh lamented the Korean people's psychological dependence on the United States. When we can stand alone we can be better allies to the United States. Otherwise we will always be a burden to you.

13. (C) FM Song attributed the controversial headlines to President Roh's speaking style, noting that the Korean president speaks in a complicated way when expressing his views. The press exploited that by selecting quotes that made the president look negative, Song suggested. He asked the Ambassador to convey to Washington that he (Song Min-soon) had told President Roh on December 21 that the United States is working very hard and showing flexibility and enthusiasm at the Six-Party Talks and that Treasury has been very businesslike in its discussions with the DPRK on the BDA issue. Song stressed, however, that both he and President Roh felt it was very important to get the BDA issue behind us in order to move the Six-Party process forward.

DIRECTOR GENERAL CHO TAE-YONG'S RESPONSE

14. (C) In response to Roh's speech, North America Division Director General Cho Tae-yong said in a December 22 meeting with Political M/C that President Roh was mainly concerned with criticizing those who had been critical of his policies. For example, the President was highly critical of the former generals who disagreed with the Roh's push to transfer OPCON at an early date. In addition, Roh supported the Zaytun deployment to Iraq; the relocation of Yongsan Garrison; and the concept of strategic flexibility. He also criticized the notion that U.S. troops should be used as trip wire. In essence, President Roh was making the case that the alliance was in good shape and that, contrary to the assertions of his critics, he had actually improved the relationship. Cho said that this speech, delivered without prepared remarks, was a "quintessential Roh speech."

15. (C) DG Cho also said that it was regrettable that the press had mischaracterized President Roh's comments on BDA. According to most newspaper accounts, the President said that the BDA enforcement actions had doomed the September 19 Joint Statement. Cho acknowledged that the President said that the Joint Statement had been "buried the moment it was born," but pointed out that the President went on to say that "spring will come" and the Joint Statement will serve as a foundation upon which the cold war structure on the Korean Peninsula could be dismantled and a multilateral security dialogue can be established. President Roh also said that the Joint Statement provided an opportunity to resolve the North Korea nuclear issues, but North Korea delayed the whole process of implementation on the pretext of financial issues. Pol M/C replied that it was not helpful to the U.S.-ROK joint efforts in the Six Party Talks if the President even appears to cast doubt on the USG's good faith intention to implement the Joint Statement. These remarks were certainly not consistent with the recent meeting between the two Presidents in Hanoi, POL M/C said. Cho insisted that President Roh was very satisfied by the USG's strong determination to fully implement the Joint Statement.

ENGLISH TEXT OF ROH'S SPEECH

16. (U) Unofficial English translation of excerpts from Roh's remarks:

There are a lot of things to talk about, but what I wanted to emphasize the most today is "principles." But the public now perceives the government as if it were a government without principles. It's a sad thing. But there's nothing we can do. If I say I'm sad and angry, that would be another problem.

That's the way I am. Even long before I became a president, whenever I had chance to speak, I never forgot to say something about "trust." The society would be maintained if there was trust, even if it's not a full democracy, whereas

it cannot be maintained without trust, even if it's a democratic society. So I used to say that I put the highest priority on trust as the most important social value. But it's embarrassing to see the reliability of policy constantly being an issue.

It goes the same with consistency. It is related to trust. It's about life. The same is true for national consensus. So the principles that I emphasized for this government are causing criticisms now. I'll try to do better. Or maybe this would be a chance for me to look at things with cool-headedness. This is homework for me. I won't surrender. But there is no way to prove that.

North Korea

The conditions, situations, and people's mindsets are all very different between North Korea and South Korea. As some would say simplistically, reciprocity is a principle that says, "you hit me and I'll hit you back." But the inter-Korean relationship is not that simple.

Rather than tying things with the principle of reciprocity, we would have to judge on a case-by-case basis, considering whether certain thing is in line with what we pursue--peace and trust. I'm not talking about unilateral concessions, but trying to earn the trust in the longer term, and judging what would be more beneficial for both Koreas, until realizing a greater goal through dialogue. In this regard, please understand that the policy concept that stand opposite reciprocity is pragmatism.

I did not practice my veto on the laws on investigating the illegal fund transmittal to North Korea. I have never expressed my opposing views either. Although this is a controversial issue, I know that the people want transparency in inter-Korean dialogue and exchanges. The universal trend of our society is a greater demand for transparency, even if it relates to "governing action." And I thought it is the right thing to accept the people's demand.

In fact, it's not that there is absolutely no room for "supra-legal governing action" in inter-Korean relations. I think it is probable--but the Chief of State can take governing actions transcending laws only when the people accept that. If the people do not universally accept it, I thought it would be difficult. It was inevitable at that time. I don't know if it was right or wrong, but it was my choice. And couldn't this be another "principle"?

There were also some minor incidents. Based on principle, I ordered to stop talks with North Korea when North Korea first stopped dialogue. Once they followed my order, but since the Ministry of Unification is a government agency trying to make things happen, there were some instances where I made orders but the Ministry of Unification said that the particular case was a little different--they would make a little different interpretation, and try not to cut the dialogue altogether. I did not hold them accountable for that, because I didn't think it was worth it.

Still now a lot of aid to North Korea has come to a halt. This is about principle, but also about strategic choice. The current stoppage of aid to North Korea is not so much based on principles (such as humanitarian or reciprocity), as on strategic basis that this would be more advantageous.

I agree with all other principles of simultaneous action and separation of government and private sector. I'll endeavor along that line. Committee member Chung Min just said that we need to convince the USG and Congress. Although the government hasn't expressly used the terms like "non-nuclear," but we are headed toward that direction. On this point, we may need to coin a good policy name or just use this term. Let me think about it.

And then there was a suggestion that we should pursue the

broader agreement on dissolving the Cold War structure and establish a peace regime, hand in hand with resolving the North Korea nuclear issue. The September 19th Joint Statement mentions just that. It has a clause on negotiating a peace regime, and also the NE Asia multilateral security system. So the September 19th statement may seem useless, since it seems to be drifting apart right now, but it contains a whole new concept of NE Asia multilateral security system.

Six-Party Talks

The September 19th statement came when the ROK played the leading role in North Korea issue. After that, the U.S. backed down a little, or rather, stuck in the BDA issue. This is really intriguing for myself. While the September 19th statement was still being written in Beijing, the US Treasury Department had already frozen North Korea's BDA account a couple of days before.

My thinking is that the U.S. State Department didn't know about it in Beijing and came all the way up to this point without being able to resolve the BDA issue. Or if we look at it from a negative perspective, the two issues may have been planned ahead and done this way on purpose.

On the other hand, the Treasury and State Departments seem to differ on interpretation of principles concerning the issue. So there may be some room for political flexibility. We're guessing that the Treasury would be inclined to go by the book, by the law, but still it's hard to know clearly.

So that's how the September 19th statement was buried as soon as it was born, but spring will come, and it will bud, and be a stepping stone for us to dissolve the Cold War structure and consolidate peace on the Peninsula, and pursue a NE Asia multilateral security system, or a peace regime. We will be headed in that direction.

North Korea Policies

You have talked about consistency and consensus, and I'll make efforts toward that. There are a lot of talks about forming a consultative body on North Korea policy, comprising the so-called senior leaders from all backgrounds. But the hardest part about bringing them together is that they cannot communicate with each other. They use different language. We experienced colonial rule, excessive ideological confrontation, a war, and military dictatorship. All along the process, we tend not to tolerate or recognize each other. So we don't use the same language. We have different perceptions. So the cause is good, but it has not been realized.

So I tried to realize it by appointing Goh Kun as my government's first PM. I hoped he would be a bridge between the conservatives and myself. But I ended up ostracizing myself and my aides in this government. The person in the middle did not converge those on the extremes but rather became isolated. As a result, I consider this personnel appointment a failure.

I also tried to emulate the U.S. president Lincoln's personnel affairs policy by engaging political rivals when I appointed Kim Geun-tae and Chung Dong-young as Cabinet ministers. But the difference between Lincoln and myself was that he was praised for his actions, but I was cursed for that. It's hard to imitate Lincoln--not much fun.

So this is the National Unification Advisory Council. This is an issue concerning unification, foreign affairs, and national security policy. From a broader perspective, this is included in, or closely related to, the area of national security. Or, maybe this is the other side of the coin. Why do we have to unify our nation? To live better? To live a more humane life? But the more essential goal would be to secure peace. This is the first and foremost issue, and then,

through that, it would be good if we could become more prosperous.

It would be a more humane life to become integrated with those who are our blood, who use the same language, and who share the same culture. To that end, we should unify. And for that purpose, peace is the essential concept for security.

What is security, then? Both winning in a war and peace are the purposes of security. But in its unique term, security would mean peace, or national activity aimed at peace. Preventing war, rather than winning a war. So it would be good to clarify the purpose of our security, which is peace, rather than winning a war.

Then how can we do it? Through dialogue. There are cases where confrontational atmosphere is constantly created for the purpose of security. In other words, trying to solidify security through being on alert against the opponent. And hostile emotions are involved here. Distrust as well. If security were to prevent war, it would be sufficient to have capability to fully defeat the enemy upon its attack, without being hurt, or with just a minor injury. This would constitute a perfect security readiness.

And then make the enemy acknowledge that it cannot defeat us through attack. Cannot defeat, therefore cannot occupy and cannot dominate. Let's think about this stage. What does it all mean if you win but cannot occupy? What is the war for, if you occupy but cannot dominate? So if there were no possibility, anyone with common sense would not start a war in the first place. So making ourselves undefeatable would deter the enemy from waging a war. How far should we go in comparison of power, where should we put our goal? The enemy will not do an outrageous thing--it will assess its adversary.

But we should find out if our adversary is in its right mind, or completely out of his mind, or an outright fool. So this is the basic premise. So when you are at a presidential campaign debate, when panels ask you what you thought about Kim Jong-il, if you thought he was a reasonable person, if you answer "yes," you come under fire. But "no" would not be an easy answer, either. So this is a unique political culture of Korea where you get questioned on those hard-to-answer issues. But I would say he would have a judgment of his own, from a certain aspect, fit for a communist regime, or Juche ideology. In other words, he wouldn't do anything that would kill himself.

We may imagine that a person may do whatever is necessary if completely cornered. But we haven't quite reached a consensus on whether he is completely out of his mind to a point where he would risk actions that would eventually kill him, or he is just an abnormal person. So the Korean society cannot even concur on that point. Some say Kim Jong-il must at least be in his right mind, but some say he is completely out of his mind.

And if you say, "he may be okay," then you'd be bashed for that. So that is how the ROK works. We monitor our safety based on such criteria. When we say we prevent war to a certain extent, there should be no injury when a war does occur. But when there is a war, you get many injuries even if you win. There are a lot of losses, so you must prevent it from happening. And the issue of setting criteria of our deterrence--should we presume Kim Jong-il is a normal person or not--has been the cause for a serious, serious fight within the ROK.

What we see in newspapers these days--albeit cartoon-like talks--are all based on this controversy. In other words, anyone in his right mind would not provoke the ROK since it's tantamount to suicide, and so I think we just need appropriate management of security. But people who don't agree seem to want to verify my ideology. When I nominate a Cabinet minister, he is asked in the NA hearing about whether the Korean War was an invasion by North Korea or South Korea.

They're thinking that I would appoint a person who doesn't even know whether the Korean war was an invasion by South or North as a Cabinet minister. It's not fair. I am sane.

So this is what makes it difficult. Everything must be resolved through dialogue, not through war or power. And the big premise for dialogue is the recognition of the other, which is the basic principle of a democracy. You should be open to the possibility that his opinion may be right. Isn't this what "relativism" is all about?

Tolerance is the premise for dialogue. We try to resolve inter-Korean issues through dialogue, and we try to put dialogue before war or use of force. And this is what security through dialogue is all about.

So we're trying to have dialogue with North Korea, but we have different perceptions. And we try to have dialogue amongst ourselves, we have different perceptions about values. There was a case in our history where 8,000 people were killed in 1866 on grounds for having believed in Catholicism, or engaged in Western studies. So while we should adopt the good parts of our ancestors, we must be aware of the fact that there were also dangerous elements in our traditional ways of thinking. We should reflect on our culture of "killing" anyone who stands on the opposite side. So we should overcome the culture of completely eliminating anything different from oneself.

Security -----

And I would like to see our security front quieter. Security can be maintained quietly, but the people tend to be relieved only when the government makes a great deal out of security. North Korea launched missiles--from northern Gangwon province to off the coast of North Hamgyeong province. It was clear the missile weren't coming toward South Korea. Wasn't everyone aware of that?

Political, security situation is something that gradually changes, not something that happens overnight. It wasn't anything like a war would break out that very day. Still, should the government have announced that North Korea launched missile, and so the people should buy up instant noodle packages and put on their gas masks? Should the government have announced a state of emergency even before dawn?

It was reported in the morning. My aides called for an emergency security meeting, but I said let's not do it, there's no reason to startle the people.

So we decided to convene at 11 o'clock as a Cabinet ministerial meeting. There would have been no difference in dealing with the situation whether if we did it as a cabinet meeting or security meeting, whether a 5 o'clock meeting or an 11 o'clock meeting. No difference in the result, and no difference in making decisions.

But I was so badly bashed for not having been noisier, not having terrified the citizens. Let's not do that. Let's be quiet. The ROK has sufficient national and military capability to safeguard the security even without all the noise.

I've raised the defense budget. Many of my supporters said I should cut defense budget and use it for welfare, but I raised defense budget. That was because I thought military capability against North Korea is not the whole story. Rather, having a strong defense capability on all fronts was important, lest foreign military forces should come play war on our soil--that was the case when Korea fell victim of the Japanese invasion, Sino-Japanese war, and the Russo-Japanese war during the power vacuum on the peninsula due to a weak military power.

So until the complex, potentially hostile relationship with

China, Japan and the U.S. is turned into a multilateral security regime or a community in NE Asia, the ROK must be equipped with reciprocal defense capability.

So that is why I couldn't cut down on defense budget. But there is no reason, no need to make people feel insecure about our North Korea policy. Our security is good even without doing so. But the poll results say I am doing poorly in security--so I think politics are very difficult. Whenever I try to stick to my beliefs, I get bashed. But still, I cannot stop. I must change what must be changed, even if that means the public disapproves me, I must do the right thing. Wasn't this the reason that the presidency cannot be extended?

U.S.-ROK Alliance

Why did I dispatch troops to Iraq? Why is the relationship with the U.S. so bad? I don't think it's bad, but people ask me that way. At first when I was elected president, there were a lot of talks of an armed attack on North Korea, concerning North Korea nuclear issue, mostly in newspapers of the US and Korea, and that caused the people a lot of insecure feelings. So that's why I said attacking North Korea is a non-starter.

Then the people who'd led our national security said that would irritate the U.S., that Roh would disrupt our relationship with the U.S. But I said that a war with North Korea is a non-starter anyhow.

That was because, the most important criteria for judging whether a nation or an individual has a friend would be to see if it has someone who borrows or invests money. So the first thing all foreign investors asked when I became President was: 1) whether there would be a war; 2) whether North Korea would collapse; and 3) whether the ROK would be in good terms with the U.S.

So the things I needed to say then was that there's going to be no war, and that we're in good terms with U.S. And the clearest proof of that would be the troop dispatch to Iraq. That's not simply a relationship issue between Roh and the U.S., but a barometer of whether our alliance was continuing to function. Some said we need to send 10,000 troops. Some said 5,000. Some said we must send combatant forces. But some opposed. And still others raised doubts about the cause of the war itself. So we eventually decided to send 3,000 non-combatant troops--wasn't this a good deal?

Speaking about "deal," it would be the most effective deal to realize the goal of earning international confidence in the stability of the US-ROK alliance with the least cost.

The U.S. raised the issue of relocating its 2nd division to the rear front. Some Koreans said no, because they were afraid of eliminating the tripwire. But we decided to relocate. Now there are a lot of controversies. Some say the security is destabilized, now that the 2nd division is at the rear, North Korea may invade, because the U.S. would not automatically intervene anymore. Others said if the U.S. attacked North Korea, then North Korea would immediately retaliate to the 2nd division in the front lines. Now that the 2nd division is relocated, the US might be preparing for attack on North Korea. Those were anti-Americans. But I thought it should be relocated. It's based on principles.

How great are the ROK forces' defense capability? Let me be frank. It outstripped that of North Korea in 1985 at the latest--now it's been 20 years since then. And we've been putting in over ten times the amount of North Korea's defense budget over those years. I don't think the money was for nothing. Many former defense ministers raise concerns about our defense power, but haven't they been negligent if our defense capability was still weaker than that of North Korea, with all that money?

So to be candid, comparing our defense capability, the USFK 2nd division can be relocated to the rear line. I would have much preferred a quieter situation by leaving them as they were, but the reason I decided to relocate was that we needed to do away with this psychological reliance on the U.S. The most important thing in national defense is the will and confidence of the people that they're keeping their own country by themselves. It's not like something guaranteed by clinging to the U.S. It's not something the people of a self-reliant nation should be doing.

I think the word "tripwire" itself is shameful. Why should we be using another country's forces for our national security purposes? If sacrifice is inevitable, then we have to shed our blood. Only then can the President of this nation talk on a more equal footing with the U.S. President, when the U.S. tries to use the USFK as leverage in whatever talks we have on economy or any other area. But now when the U.S. ever hints at withdrawing its troops, just about every Korean goes faint. How can I talk equally with my U.S. counterpart?

Of course we cannot do a perfectly equal diplomacy with the U.S. It may be senseless to think so, since the U.S. is a superpower. We should respect and treat the U.S. befitting its power and global influence. We cannot go against the world order led by the U.S. But at least we should save our face as a self-reliant, independent nation. Can't we at least from time to time push forward with some nerve?

But in a country where the people panic when they talk about relocating the 2nd division of USFK, how can the President or Foreign Minister talk with U.S. government officials on equal footing? We should resolve this psychological reliance. So that's why I relocated. And when talks about reducing USFK came out, I said yes. They said let's keep it closed-door. I said let's leave it open. Then they said let's postpone it. So we talked about troop cuts a year later. But eventually talks about troop cuts came out from the U.S. side. We asked why did you raise this when you suggested postponing the talks. Then they said we were the ones who asked for postponement. So there's a lot of arguing, but I haven't investigated this. Anyway, I think some troop cuts won't hurt.

Why must we move the Yongsan base? It's an expensive property. It would cost approximately 5.5 trillion won for base relocation. Although there may be some pluses and minuses, it would be much more expensive when you try to buy that real estate with money. If it were not the USFK and a property of an individual, then the government would make assessment and pay the money and buy the land. So why is USFK located there, blocking the subway route, roads, and any cultural or commercial facilities for Korean citizens? Why can't we do it? Because we had no money. Former presidents Kim Young-sam and Noh Tae-woo reached an agreement, but the government didn't have the money. But now that the economic crisis is gone, and we can pay the money over a 10-year term, now we should purchase the land.

That makes the situation look simple, but it makes such a noise in Pyongtaek, and people will ask why is the Roh government so noisy. But we should be doing what needs to be done.

It is true that this (USFK base) undermines our symbol of a self-reliant nation. Even if we're allies, it hurts to have foreign forces at the center of our capital city, particularly on the spot where the forces from Qing dynasty had been stationed in the past. Don't you think the "independence gate" that our ancestors constructed is historically symbolic? The base relocation must also be seen from the same perspective. Humans are historical animals. Yongsan base and OPCON transfer--the cause is for self-reliance.

The same thing. Don't we have the capability to conduct operational control? What have the ROK forces done so far? They all served in the military, I served in the military,

trained in the reserved force, paid taxes. But those on the higher ranks--what did they do? Did they just enjoy the title of Defense Minister and JCS Chairman, without even having their own military get ready for their own OPCON? Is that why they scramble for issuing statements opposing OPCON transfer? Isn't that a kind of delinquency? Shame on them.

I believe the ROK forces will do fine. Korea's strong in its economy, culture, film industry, cell phones, automobiles, shipbuilding, everything. Why not OPCON?

We should always maintain readiness for a contingency situation, concerning North Korea and concerning China. China will do the same. And when we have our own OPCON, it will make difference in our dealing with North Korea and China diplomatically, concerning NE Asia security issues.

It doesn't make sense for a country without its own OPCON to discuss anything--whether to bomb civilian facilities, for instance--with China or North Korea. This is something very important in terms of diplomatic interest.

I don't think those opponents to OPCON transfer are ignorant of this important aspect. Then again, it puzzles me to think why they would have stayed mum on OPCON so far, if they already knew all this. It's like opposing whatever Roh does would be justice. They're simply trying to shake me. They consider me to have suddenly appeared on stage out of nowhere. That's the way it is.

Whether we agree to OPCON or not, this is a diplomatic issue. In our relationship with China, we'll be able to say to China that: we'll be cautious on any hostile action in NE Asia, even when there is the USFK; we've agreed so on OPCON; nothing that the Korean public opposes will not happen, and things that the Korean public agree would take place. Isn't this the best? Even if we set everything now, you never know what will happen in the future. So the best thing at this point would be to take action on whatever the Korean public agrees to, and not to do whatever the public opposes.

How can we set everything now? I talked with President Bush on this issue a lot. Everything's taken care of. There is this philosophy underlying the National Defense Reform. It was talked about during the Noh Tae-woo, Kim Young-sam, and Kim Dae-jung administrations, but the bill has just now passed the national Assembly. But implementation is not taking place. Who would like a reform? It's actually self-restructuring, isn't it? The President can't do it alone. Eventually, the Ministry of national Defense, the military, shaped the reform plan and announced it to the public.

Defense Reform 2020--it doesn't need more money, in particular. The troops are cut to 500,000--because it needs to be cut and can be cut. Some raise the issue of cutting personnel and expanding weaponry. Of course if we are to fight only with North Korea, it'll be good to have more troops, since there may be a lot of ground battles. But if we think of our security from a more diverse perspective, the number of troops wouldn't do it. Rather, we should cut budget on feeding, clothing, housing people, and rather invest in developing an advanced, well-performing weapons.

Low birth rates are an issue these days. Rather than keeping them several years in the military, we should let them work, get married, and have kids early on.

We need to change the whole system of our society into one that encourages getting married early and getting employed early. Otherwise, the economy would stall. We're now on the planning stage for the policy shift.

What do you think are the things in the military that became worse since I became President? Reporters don't have much to write about these days concerning the military, because there is nothing going poorly--whether it's a personnel appointment, or a 1.4 trillion won-worth procurement project

where we selected the contracting party, without any rumors about corruption or shady transactions.

There were a lot of suicide incidents, shooting accidents. We should work on that expeditiously. But culture is not something that is fixed overnight.

Currently, dramatic changes are happening on the practices concerning personnel, procurement, and budget transparency. The army life is fast changing too. We're currently doing construction or repair works on their barracks through private sector investment. And we are also trying to work on helping retired officers get jobs, in order to restructure the military.

So we're now doing our best. But we postponed appointing a civilian as a Defense Minister, since it would be too much at this time.

I think my pace of social reform is also too fast for some. People tell me they're dizzy because of that. So I settled with postponing the civilianization of the Ministry of National Defense--which means the appointment of a civilian as Defense Minister.

Since we're at a critical point to reform the military, I thought it would be good for the President to trust the military itself and let them conduct their reform on their own. That is why I decided to postpone civilianization of the Ministry of National Defense and put military reform first.

I'm positive it'll go well. Security will go well.

There are a lot of talks about Roh doing good and bad, but please help me by telling others that Roh seems to be doing at least what he needs to do as a President, focused on doing the best thing for the nation based on principles, and now that we've elected him already, let's give him a chance to take care of defense, foreign affairs, security, and unification. Let him take care of it...he's not an outright fool. He knows what to take care of and what to calculate. Let him do his work...Please.
VERSHBOW